



OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM UPDATE

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs

March 24, 2003
0900 hrs.

Situational Update

- In and around Baghdad, Coalition forces continue air and special operations activities with good success. In the south, our air units continue the campaign towards Baghdad and continue to operate in and around the area in support of ground forces.
- Combat operations have met with resistance in some locations, the most notable of which is in the vicinity of An-Nasiriyah. United States Marines defeated an enemy attack there while sustaining a number of killed and wounded in the sharpest engagement of the war thus far.
- Also in the vicinity of An-Nasiriyah, a United States Army supply convoy was ambushed by irregular Iraqi forces. A number of American service members were wounded in that action. And, as a result of that action, 12 U.S. service members are reported missing. Subsequently, Iraqi regime officials displayed captured Americans on state television. This is a clear violation of the Geneva Convention.
- A PATRIOT firing battery successfully intercepted and destroyed an incoming Iraqi tactical ballistic missile during an attack on U.S. and Coalition Forces in Kuwait at approximately 1:00 a.m. (5:00 p.m. EST). Two bright orange flashes were seen over Kuwait as the engaging PATRIOT missile destroyed the Iraqi TBM.
- A U.S. Air Force MQ-1 Predator found and destroyed a radar-guided anti-aircraft artillery piece in southern Iraq Saturday at 5:25 EST making it the first Predator strike of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The multi-role Predator used one AGM-114K "Hellfire II" missile to strike an Iraqi ZSU-23-4 Mobile anti-aircraft artillery gun outside the southern Iraqi town of Al Amarah.

Important Transcripts

Secretary Rumsfeld Interview with Tim Russert,
NBC Meet The Press: 3/23/03
http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/t03232003_t0323nbc.html

Key Points

- **The outcome of Operation Iraqi Freedom is clear and inevitable.**
 - The outcome of this operation will be the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime
 - The objective is clear: end the regime as quickly as possible and with as few casualties as possible.
 - The war's duration depends on the Iraqi leadership—they should follow the Coalition instructions to surrender.
 - U.S. officials are appealing to military personnel in Iraq for their surrender.
 - There remain many unknowns—significant resistance may lie ahead.
 - Those who use or carry out orders to use weapons of mass destruction will be tracked down and punished.
- **The Iraqis treatment of POWs blatantly violates the Geneva Convention but it will not deter us from the mission.**
 - People who treat POWs badly will be treated as war criminals.
 - Any Coalition combatants held by the enemy must be considered Prisoners of War and be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention.
 - Article 13 of the Geneva Convention states: "prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity."

Today in DoD

- A Pentagon briefing is tentatively scheduled for 1:00 p.m. Briefer TBD. **Press briefings may be viewed on Senate Channel 27 or House Channel 24.**
- Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Victoria Clarke will brief a meeting of Press Secretaries and MLAs in the Cannon Caucus room at 2:30 EST.

For Press Secretary or MLA Inquiries on Current Operations:

Call Legislative Affairs (703) 697-6210

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